United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, en route to New York, welcomes efforts by Pakistan and Iran towards peaceful settlement of Afghan question and stresses need for neighbouring countries to "actively promote national unity and reconciliation of Afghan people".

+ Security Council authorizes United Nations operation in Somalia; asks Secretary-General to deploy 50 observers to monitor cease-fire.

+ Security Council condemns use of force in Bosnia-Hercegovina; approves Secretary-General's plan to accelerate deployment of observers.

+ Secretary-General cites fighting in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia-Hercegovina as "complicating factor" for timely resumption of responsibilities by United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia.

+ United Nations offers its assistance for "safe and voluntary" repatriation of Myanmar refugees in Bangladesh.

+ Secretary-General states World Programme of Action for Disabled Persons can open way to their full participation in society.

+ General Assembly President meets in Tokyo with Japanese Emperor and officials.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has left Teheran for New York, thus ending his three-week trip to Europe and Asia, including visits to Pakistan and Iran.

Briefing correspondents today on the Secretary-General's activities over the weekend, a United Nations spokeswoman said Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali had met yesterday in Teheran with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and President Ali-Akbar Hahsemi Rafsanjani.

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This morning, she said, the Secretary-General held a second round of talks with the Foreign Minister, and another meeting with the Iranian President. During these talks - described as "constructive" - a wide range of international and regional issues were discussed, in particular, the situation in Afghanistan, the question of Nagorno-Karabakh and Security Council resolution 598 (1987), which called for an immediate cease-fire between Iran and Iraq.

During the meetings, the Secretary-General welcomed the efforts made by Iran towards achieving a peaceful settlement of the Afghan question and emphasized the need for neighbouring countries to actively promote the national unity and reconciliation of the Afghan people. He also emphasized the need to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

Before leaving Iran today, Secretary-General met with Iran-based Mujahiddeen group Hezb-i-Wahdat-e-Islami (Islamic Unity Party).

Yesterday, the Secretary-General ended his three-day official visit to Pakistan during which he held talks with Pakistan's President, Ghulam Ishag Khan; Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif; and Foreign Minister Muhammad Siddique Khan Kanju on a wide variety of international and regional issues, including Afghanistan and Kashmir.

During the meetings, the Secretary-General welcomed Pakistan's "firm support" for United Nations efforts in Afghanistan. He noted that the establishment of a durable peace and the maintenance of national unity were prerequisites for solliciting the necessary financial and humanitarian assistance from the international community.

With regard to the current developments in Kabul, the Secretary-General appealed to all concerned to exercise restraint and to avoid violence at this final stage.

He also expressed concern about the situation in Kashmir, saying he hoped that ongoing dialogue between the two parties would lead to peaceful solution of the question.

During his visit to Pakistan, the Secretary-General was accompanied by his Personal Representative in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan.

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The Security Council has decided to establish a United Nations Operation in the north-west African nation of Somalia -- to be known as UNOSOM - to facilitate an immediate cessation of hostilities and the maintenance of a cease-fire throughout the country, to promote the process of reconciliation and political settlement, and to provide urgent humanitarian assistance.

During a meeting on Friday night, 24 April, the Council voted unanimously to send 50 United Nations observers to monitor the cease-fire in Mogadishu and approved in principle the Secretary-General's plan to deploy a security force

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as soon as possible to escort humanitarian assistance from the port to nearby distribution centres.

The Council called on all parties, movements and factions in Somalia for an immediate cease-fire throughout the country. It also appealed to the international community for financial and other support for the Secretary-General's 90-day Plan of Action for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for an estimated 5 million people in need of food, seeds and basic health care.

The Secretary-General stated in his report to the Council that the effectiveness of the plan required full recognition of the principles of international humanitarian assistance, namely that designated "corridors" and "zones of peace" must be maintained; and that the inviolability of all United Nations and non-governmental personnel was a fundamental prerequisite.

According to a United Nations spokeswoman today, the resolution adopted Friday night has been handed over to both Interim President Mahdi and General Aideed in Mogadishu. Informal consultations on the composition of the 50 military advisers began over the weekend and would be submitted to the Security Council in a few days.

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In a second meeting Friday night, the Security Council demanded an immediate end to all forms of interference from outside Bosnia-Hercegovina and specifically urged country's neighbours to exercise all their influence to that end.

In a statement read out by Acting Council President Stanislaus Chigwedere (Zimbabwe) on its behalf, the Council asked the States neighbouring Bosnia-Hercegovina to condemn publicly and unreservedly the use of force, and urged all regular or irregular military forces to act in accordance with those principles.

The statement noted with satisfaction the decision of the Secretary-General to accelerate the deployment in Bosnia-Hercegovina of 100 military observers from the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR).

The Secretary-General observed in his report to the Council, dated 24 April, that the situation had "worsened markedly" since March and announced his decision to advance the dispatch of 41 unarmed military observers. The report summarized the outcome of the seventh mission to the region of Cyrus Vance, Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General on Yugoslavia, from 14 to 18 April. Mr. Boutros-Ghali said he concurred with Mr. Vance's conclusion that "no party to the conflict is blameless" and that all sides "have to bear some of the responsibility" of the outbreak of the conflict and its continuation.

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The Security Council will hold consultations tomorrow afternoon on the Secretary-General's report on Mr. Vance's mission to Yugoslavia, as well as on the Secretary-General progress report, dated 24 April.

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The fighting in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia-Hercegovina had been a "complicating factor" in the assumption of responsibilities by the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) by the middle of May, a later date than originally planned. This was stated today in the Secretary-General's progress report to the Security Council, dated 24 April, on the "earliest stages" of the Force's operation.

One factor cited was the time involved in transferring infantry battalions and their equipment from distant countries to the mission area, at an acceptable cost to Member States. However, the report said, so far it had been possible to maintain the schedule originally presented to the Council.

Other issues, the Secretary-General said, have made clear "the complexity of the challenge" confronting the Force and the United Nations as a whole. He pointed to a proposal by federal authorities that certain areas in Croatia, primarily inhabited by Serbs, be included in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs). Another proposal by the Croatian side sought UNPROFOR's assistance concerning the presence of Serb irregular forces in these areas, without including them in the UNPAs. The Secretary-General said these questions went beyond the existing provisions of the United Nations peace-keeping plan. However, in view of their implications for UNPROFOR's viability, he said, consultations were continuing with both sides.

The report also acknowledged that some of the difficulties UNPROFOR was experiencing were the kind frequently experienced by new peace-keeping operations. Other problems, however, raised concern about the commitment of the parties to the demilitarization of the UNPAs, maintenance of existing arrangements for local administration and public order, as well as the voluntary return of displaced persons to their homes.

The Security Council will hold consultations tomorrow afternoon on the progress report as well as on the Secretary-General's report based on Mr. Vance's seventh mission to Yugoslavia.
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Spokeswoman Nadia Younes announced today that Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordinator for Emergency Relief, Jan Eliasson, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mrs. Sadako Ogata, had held talks during the weekend with the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh and Myanmar.

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They reiterated to the Foreign Ministers that repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh would be safe and voluntary, and offered the assistance of the United Nations.

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Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali sent a message of hope to the Expert Group Meeting on a Long-term Strategy to Further Implementation of the World Program of Action for Disabled Persons, meeting this weekend in Vancouver, Canada.

In his message, delivered on his behalf by Under-Secretary-General for Public Affairs, Joseph Verner Reed, the Secretary-General praised the sponsors of the gathering for beginning to open the way for the full participation of disabled persons throughout the world.

The three-day meeting, which ended today, marks the final year of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The Secretary General said in his message that "it is important at this point for the United Nations to assess the progress that has been made during the past 10 years and to determine what challenges continue to face disabled people world-wide".

In 1981, the General Assembly passed a comprehensive resolution declaring a decade of international attention to be paid to the rights and challenges of the disabled persons of the world. One year later, in 1982, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was drawn up by the General Assembly with a built in 10-year mandate.

In his closing remarks, the Secretary General said that the last year of the Decade "will be used as a transitional point for putting into place the lessons learned for transforming awareness into action". To accomplish this task the Secretary General urged political leaders around the world to accord disability issues the high priority they deserve.

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The President of the General Assembly, Samir Shihabi (Saudi Arabia), met last week in Tokyo with Japanese elected officials and the country's Emperor.

During his two-day visit to Japan, which ended on Friday, 24 April, Mr. Shihabi acknowledged that Japan never hesitated to pay its share to the United Nations on time. He also expressed his appreciation for Japan's backing and financial support of the United Nations.

At a lunch given in his honour on Thursday, the Assembly President expressed the Assembly's appreciation for Japan's interest in contributing to the United Nations peace-keeping activities, adding that such contributions were the duty and moral responsibility of all Member States.

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